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PRINCIPLES AND PRACTICE OF PRIMARY AND SECONDARY PREVENTION IN DEMAND REDUCTION PROGRAMMES

Strategy for demand reduction of the United Nations International Drug Control Programme

Report of the Executive Director

Summary

In its resolution 1995/16 of 24 July 1995, the Economic and Social Council requested the Executive Director of the United Nations International Drug Control Programme (UNDCP) clearly to define the UNDCP strategy for demand reduction. In response to that request, the Executive Director has identified the following three main objectives of the demand reduction strategy: to provide Governments with information on the nature, patterns and trends in drug abuse, for use in formulating drug-control policy; to identify effective methodologies and programmes for demand reduction in different socio-economic and cultural contexts; and to increase the effectiveness of measures undertaken at the national level to prevent and reduce drug abuse. The implementation strategies are described for each objective.

*E/CN.7/1996/1.

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INTRODUCTION

1. The Commission on Narcotic Drugs, at its thirty-eighth session, recommended to the Economic and Social Council the adoption of a draft resolution entitled "Integration of demand reduction initiatives into a cohesive strategy to combat drug abuse", which became Council resolution 1995/16 of 24 July 1995.

2. The Council, in its resolution 1995/16, requested the Executive Director of the United Nations International Drug Control Programme (UNDCP) clearly to define the UNDCP global strategy for demand reduction, in consultation with Governments, appropriate United Nations agencies and non-governmental organizations, and to report on the subject to the Commission at its thirty-ninth session. A note verbale on the issue, dated 13 July 1995, was sent to Governments, United Nations bodies and intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations, which were invited to submit their comments and suggestions as a contribution to the development of the strategy. The present report, which contains an outline of the planned strategy and objectives of UNDCP in the field of demand reduction, was prepared in response to that request.

THE STRATEGY

3. In the face of a worsening drug-abuse situation (see E/CN.7/1996/5), the international community is attaching greater importance to tackling the problem of the illicit demand for drugs as an essential component of a comprehensive, well-balanced approach to drug control. Particular attention is being paid to measures that may be effective in preventing initial abuse and dependence. The core function of UNDCP in demand reduction is to develop strategies and to identify the means by which the illicit demand for drugs can be reduced. That function is performed in the context of the overall leadership role of UNDCP in the United Nations system on issues of drug abuse, and relies on a close and collaborative relationship with other relevant agencies. UNDCP has functions which are cross-sectoral and interdisciplinary, combining normative and operational dimensions, and plays a pivotal role in the articulation of policy in relation to the concept and practice of demand reduction.

4. In pursuing the three objectives of the demand reduction strategy outlined below, UNDCP will continue to act as a catalyst, stimulating other organizations to address the issue of the reduction of illicit demand for drugs as an integral part of its work. UNDCP will reinforce its unique position in relation to the collection of data and dissemination of knowledge concerning not only the extent, patterns and trends of drug abuse worldwide, but also concerning information on the programmes that prove to be effective. UNDCP will also continue to provide technical cooperation in the form of advice and financial support to assist Governments in implementing their demand reduction objectives. In carrying out its functions, UNDCP will be engaged in the exchange of knowledge and experience of a technical and scientific nature in the field of demand reduction, and will actively participate in international debates and forums on the subject.

A. First objective

5. The first objective of the programme is to provide Governments with information on, and analyses of, the nature, patterns and trends in drug abuse, for use in formulating drug-control policy at the international and national levels, and to ensure that the UNDCP programme of activities is based on timely and complete information and knowledge.

6. The collection of information is intended to permit a series of analyses, essential for any policy decisions, including the identification of what demand reduction programmes need to be established, where and for whom. UNDCP has a unique world position in the field of demand reduction in relation to the collection, interpretation and dissemination of data and knowledge. That position will be capitalized upon. The data which are directly collected provide an overview of the world situation with regard to drug abuse and also of what Governments are doing by way of demand reduction programmes. UNDCP will give advice

to Governments on the requirements and modalities of demand reduction programmes. That advice can be given only within the context of specific knowledge of the particular drug situation in the country concerned, and of the human, structural and financial resources available.

7. Through the International Drug Abuse Assessment System (IDAAS) and by linking up with existing networks of epidemiologists and other social scientists, information on the world situation with regard to drug abuse, as well as on government responses to it, can be collected. Emphasis will be placed both on the establishment of networks with other sources of information and on the management and further development of the UNDCP database and its system of data collection. UNDCP will develop and promote the harmonization of methodologies for data collection in order to improve the quality and comparability of data, as well as to promote and disseminate suitable methodologies. Those efforts should result in a strengthening of IDAAS and the establishment of an international network of professionals to share information with each other - and with UNDCP for the benefit of the international community - on patterns and trends in drug abuse.

8. UNDCP will promote the use of rapid assessment studies as a tool which provides an assessment of the drug-abuse problem of a given locality and of the resources locally available to deal with it. Rapid assessment studies provide the platform on which to design activities. It will also promote and support research on the causes of drug abuse and its impact on societies and economies, and share the results with the international community. UNDCP aims therefore at improving the comparability of national and international drug abuse data, increasing the usefulness to member States, and to UNDCP itself, of the UNDCP system of data collection for demand reduction, and enhancing the capacity of the systems of data collection and analysis of the member States themselves.

Implementation

9. In pursuing the first objective of the strategy, UNDCP will examine IDAAS in order to improve its functioning. It will also ensure that the necessary links are made between IDAAS and the existing UNDCP database for supply reduction. The improved system will produce output in the form of country drug profiles incorporating demand, supply and legislative aspects of drug abuse.

10. UNDCP will devise and implement a strategy for revising the Annual Reports Questionnaire (E/CN.7/1991/CRP.10) submitted by Governments to the Secretary-General in order to ensure that key drug-abuse data are covered, particular attention being given to age- and gender-specific data, as well as to reduce the burden placed on member States to provide the data. It will also design a training strategy addressing those responsible for data collection and management at the national level, and will develop or adapt guidelines for the use of secondary data in the assessment of drug abuse.

11. UNDCP will link up, by electronic means, with a small number of selected specialists and organizations to facilitate the exchange of information. The results will be reviewed, and consideration will be given to expansion of the system into a full-scale data exchange network.

B. Second objective

12. The second objective is to identify effective methodologies and programmes for demand reduction in different socio-economic and cultural contexts, and to make them known to member States, international organizations and experts.

13. The global perspective of UNDCP enables it to identify effective methodologies and programmes as examples of the application of basic principles of demand reduction, adapted to local conditions. Taking due account of the multitude of approaches followed in different countries and even within individual countries, UNDCP will identify, strengthen, monitor and evaluate a small number of programmes for demand reduction

to serve as demonstration or model programmes. They will be programmes from which others can learn, and which can even be used for training. The knowledge that arises from the design, implementation and evaluation of the programmes will be synthesized and made known to a wider audience.

Implementation

14. In the pursuit of the second objective, UNDCP will develop methods and tools for the identification and dissemination of effective policies, techniques, programme modalities and resource materials on the prevention of drug abuse, and for the treatment, rehabilitation and social reintegration of former drug abusers.

15. UNDCP will thereby acquire a greater knowledge of the effectiveness of different methodologies for, and approaches to, demand reduction, and disseminate that knowledge to Governments and international organizations. It will also establish international networks of specialized institutions for the exchange of technical information on demand reduction issues.

C. Third objective

16. The third objective is to increase the effectiveness of measures undertaken at the national level to prevent and reduce drug abuse.

17. Reducing the illicit demand for drugs must be dealt with primarily at the national and local levels. Nevertheless, international support can be instrumental in enhancing the effectiveness of national efforts. Support will be given to member States by such means as the provision of technical and legal advice, expert meetings and technical cooperation projects addressing national, subregional and regional concerns.

Implementation

18. Priority will be given to the provision of technical advice and assistance to interconnected prevention, treatment and rehabilitation programmes judged to be effective, particularly pilot and demonstration activities. In order to ensure sustainability, the programmes will be implemented in the context of wider health, education and other social development programmes. The projects will serve as practical examples of what can be done in specific situations, the principles of which can be transferred elsewhere.

19. Special attention will be devoted to the promotion and support of research on the applications of demand reduction techniques, and to the development and analysis of methodologies by which such knowledge can be transferred through technical cooperation projects that foster community participation, where feasible, and that rely to the greatest extent possible on partnerships with other institutions, including organizations in the United Nations system, such as the International Labour Organization, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization and the World Health Organization. The mobilization of civil society in demand reduction activities will be encouraged.